5: Harrison D-4 (1913-1924) 1924 MI Middle East
Maritime Arabs

466 body and soul. The one redeeming feature of the system
426 is that debts are not transmissible from father to son and theoretically each boy starts out with a clean slate, but too often the filial loyalty of the son is appealed to and he assumes his father's debts. This plan allows the old man to retire from his life of hardship. Nothing suits the captain better, for thus the boy is deprived of his only chance to keep free from the slavery that has bound his father.

465 But in spite of its financial drawbacks the work has a great fascination for the Arab, and this is largely because of its element of chance. The Oriental is an inveterate gambler, and the Arab is no exception. Some years the reward of an individual diver may be next to nothing. Another season he may make a thousand *rupees*, or about three hundred and fifty dollars. Over night the whole aspect of the season may change. A pearl worth fifty thousand *rupees* may be discovered at any time. The largest pearl sold locally during the past ten years brought one hundred and twenty thousand *rupees*. Arabs tell of boats whose divers have cleared over two thousand *rupees* or more in a season, but such mythical individuals are hard to find. It is far easier to find the man who has failed to make two *rupees*. However, to do the industry justice, such individuals are rare also. In fair seasons the average must lie somewhere between three hundred and seven hundred *rupees*, or one hundred to two hundred and fifty dollars.

465 At the end of the season the profit, such as it is, is re-
517 ported and the money divided. The divers each receive their share, and the assistants each two-thirds of a share. Men in debt receive a more or less liberal allowance, and the town is filled with rejoicing divers who have just re-

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turned from four months or more of exhausting work, during which time they have been half starved and have had no opportunity of finding enjoyment and pleasure, legitimate or otherwise. The result is precisely what might be expected. Persian rugs in the bazaar go up to twice their proper price as does anything else that the divers may fancy. Meat reaches the highest price of the year, and the same is true of fish, which food the divers enjoy above everything else. Gambling is all but universal. Immorality flourishes. This state of affairs lasts a month, perhaps two months. Then things gradually settle down into the regular winter stagnation until the next diving season.

The same thing happens on a smaller scale when the season opens. Advances are made to the men. Feasts are held. There is much good fellowship and coöperation as the preparations for the season are completed. The chanting of singers can be heard late into the night. The money advanced by the captains makes a great show as it is spent. Strangers come in from far and near to go out and dive with the local men, and the city wears such a gala appearance as it scarcely puts on again till the next season.

It is thus that an astonishingly attractive tinsel surface is maintained over an industry and a manner of life that even for Arabia are bitterly sordid and exhausting. The pearl diver's life is one of poverty, hard and cruel. In a bad season it is with difficulty that he gets enough to eat. His lot is distinctly worse than that of the date cultivator. Diving wrecks the health as no other Arabian occupation wrecks it. The high pressure of the water at great depths frequently bursts the ear drums, and it is a safe conjecture that no community of equal size anywhere can show

[* Lot divers returning with their wages -- Analyst]